

GIVING CIRCLES: SELF-HELP/MUTUAL AID, COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY, OR BOTH?

ANGELA M. EIKENBERRY

University of Nebraska at Omaha

ABSTRACT

Giving circles are growing in number in the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. They involve individuals pooling resources and deciding together where and how to give these away. They also include social, educational, and volunteer opportunities for members. Most work on giving circles to date has focused on the contributions they make to nonprofit organizations as a means to address community problems. This article focuses on the dual purposes of giving circles to: 1) serve members as self-help/mutual aid groups for wealthy and other philanthropists; and 2) provide resources to the community. Based on data gathered through interviews, document analysis, and secondary data, the article asserts that giving circles provide their greatest value as self-help/mutual aid sources for members rather than as mechanisms for addressing community problems and this has important implications for the expectations of voluntary institutions in a new governance/risk environment.

INTRODUCTION

The New River Valley Change Network is a group of about 12 individuals—mostly women with varying backgrounds and experiences—who meet once a month in each other's homes and offices in Blacksburg, Virginia to socialize and give away money they collectively contribute to a fund held at the local

community foundation.¹ The group started in August of 2007. Each member donates about \$10 a month or \$100 a year to the fund and members decide together, through a consensus decision-making process, where to give their money. The group members learn from each other about what is going on in the community, and occasionally from community experts and activists whom they invite to their meetings to find out about projects or organizations in need of funding. They prefer to fund small organizations and endeavors that might lead to social change.

Washington Womenade raises money by holding potluck dinners where attendees donate \$35 to a fund that provides financial assistance to individuals who need help paying for prescriptions, utility bills, rent, food, and so on.² “Members” show up when they choose to and the focus of their time together is highly social though there is some discussion at the events about funding recipients. An important emphasis of the group is empowerment of its own members as well as those they fund. In 2002, *Real Simple* magazine (Korelitz, 2002) did a story on Washington Womenade, leading to the creation of more than 40 Womenade groups across the country.

Social Venture Partners (SVP) Seattle, one of 24 SVP affiliates in the United States, Canada, and Japan, asks Partners to commit approximately \$5,000 annually for 2 years to participate in the group. SVP Seattle chooses organizations to receive grants through a rigorous process conducted by a grants committee. Many SVP Seattle members also donate their time to the organizations they fund to help with capacity building efforts. The group follows a venture philanthropy philosophy that emphasizes long-term relationships with funding recipients, the provision of seed capital and organizational advice, and close tracking of funding recipients’ progress and effectiveness.³ Just as important as the funding they provide, SVP emphasizes the capacity building of its members, offering educational sessions on issue-areas and on strategic philanthropy.

The Funding Network in London started in 2002 and is a network of eight groups located in the United Kingdom and other locations around the world including: Leeds, London, Oxford, Scotland, South Africa, Southwest England, and Toronto. The cost to join The Funding Network in London is £75 (US\$115) per individual or couple or £200 (US\$309) for corporate membership. In addition, members are asked to make a minimum pledge amount of £100 (US\$155) during funding meetings held occasionally throughout the year. The Funding Network members provide funds to charities that first must be “sponsored” by a member

¹ Information on the New River Valley Change Network was gathered through my participant observations while a member of the group from August 2006 to August 2007.

² Information on Washington Womenade, SVP Seattle, and the Funding Network was gathered through interviewing and/or document analysis (see methods section).

³ Venture philanthropy is defined as “the application of venture capital principles and practices to achieve social change” (Gingold, 2000, para. 4).

and then chosen by a committee to make a pitch to the entire membership at a funding meeting. At this meeting, members pledge—in an auction-like format—money to the charities of their choosing after charities present to the group in attendance. So far, the Funding Network has raised more than £1.5 (US\$2.3 million) for more than 250 charities (Mason, 2006; McLean, 2005; The Funding Network, n.d.; Unwin, 2003).

The groups described above—called giving circles—are a few examples of a rapidly growing movement in the United States and elsewhere. They involve individuals pooling their resources to support organizations and individuals of mutual interest. They are also independent voluntary associations that frequently include social, educational, and engagement opportunities for members, connecting participants to one another and to their communities. It is impossible to say how many giving circles exist because of their grassroots and emergent nature. In 2005, the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers listed approximately 200 giving circles in the United States and Canada in its giving circles database. By 2007, they had listed nearly 600 giving circles in the United States, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. There is strong indication that many more exist and will continue to emerge.

Giving circles are clearly growing in popularity and numbers around the globe as a way for individuals to be more philanthropic and engaged in their communities, but in a way that is different from that provided by traditional voluntary associations and modern organized philanthropy. What makes giving circles different from traditional voluntary associations is the environment in which they have emerged and in which they operate: a philanthropic sector where voluntary associations are losing numbers and increasingly bureaucratized (Gundelach & Torpe, 1996; Putnam, 2000; Skocpol, 2002). They are also unique in that their express purpose is to give away money and other resources for community betterment. Earlier institutions in the U.S. such as Women's Clubs and Rotaries often did not start or sustain such a focus; the philanthropic aspect either emerged later (Stivers, 2000, p. 50) or was secondary to the main intent of the group (Charles, 1993, p. 3).

Giving circles represent one way in which collective grassroots philanthropy and voluntary association manifest themselves in today's "new philanthropy" environment.⁴ As opposed to traditional or modern organized philanthropy, led by large voluntary institutions such as foundations and federated giving programs, and characterized by rationalization, professionalization, and bureaucracy; the new philanthropy is said to be guided by individual donors and emphasizes collaboration across groups and sectors, hands-on, unconventional modes of giving and volunteering, and a focus on grassroots problem-solving

⁴ Philanthropy's meaning and manifestations have changed a good deal throughout history (Curti, 1973). It has come to be defined broadly as the act of giving money and other resources, including time, to aid individuals, causes, and organizations.

(McCully, 2008). Schervish and Havens (2001) have described this as a shift from a “demand-side” to a “supply-side” philanthropy. Compared with other philanthropic mechanisms, such as check writing or foundation grant making, giving circles seem to be something different in that they offer a more engaged, personal experience and enable individuals of less wealthy means to actively participate in organized philanthropy at a more significant level (Eikenberry, 2009).

It is unlikely a coincidence that giving circles and the new philanthropy have emerged at the same time governments around the world increasingly look to self-help/mutual aid and voluntary efforts as means for addressing all sorts of collective problems in society—from the case of local governments that seek to rely on voluntary contributions to revitalize entire city blocks or pay for basic health and safety equipment (Buntin, 2004; City of San Diego, n.d.) to developing countries that must depend on self-help/mutual aid, charity, and the aid of voluntary agencies to assist victims of major disasters (Ex-presidents, 2005; Özerdem & Jacoby, 2006). In the United States, scholars in the 1980s and 1990s such as Charles Murray (1984) and Marvin Olasky (1992) argued for less government and more charity and voluntarism to “empower” the poor during tough economic times. More recently, associational democrats such as Paul Hirst view voluntary institutions “as means of unburdening the state and revitalizing small-scale . . . arenas of democratic decision making” (Warren, 2001, p. 10). George H. W. Bush’s “thousand points of light,” Bill Clinton’s “charitable choice amendment,” and George W. Bush’s “faith-based initiative” were all manifestations of this drive to link voluntary action to smaller government; to encourage voluntarism as replacement for state-sponsored collective action.

This shift from state action to voluntarism goes deeper than privatization and contracting out public services to nonprofit organizations. Indeed, Hurricane Katrina’s aftermath showed the degree to which the state has come to rely on voluntary action, including self-help and mutual aid, to address what were once considered collective and public problems. For example, the *planned* response by the city of New Orleans to a potential disaster relied heavily on the hopes that neighbors and congregation members would voluntarily help New Orleans’ immobile population leave the city in an emergency (Kiefer & Montjoy, 2006), while in response to the disaster President Bush called on Americans to donate funds to “help the good folks of this part of the world get back on their feet” (U.S. White House, 2005). We also see the effects of this shift daily in the criminal justice arena where, for example, Alano (no alcohol) Clubs in the State of Michigan “are experiencing challenges related to the steadily growing number of *court-ordered* meeting attendees” due to shifts in philosophy and policy regarding drug courts (Mulder, 2008, p. 2, emphasis mine). The use of this drug court model is growing across the country (Huddleston, Freeman-Wilson, & Marlowe, 2005).

Political scientists and public administrators have euphemistically described this shift from state action to voluntary action as the “new governance” (Pierre,

2000; Rhodes, 1994; Sørensen, 2000). Sociologists argue that it has helped to create a detraditionalized “risk” society; that is, a society that is increasingly characterized by the dissolution of traditional parameters and support systems such as social welfare institutions (Bauman, 2000, 2001; Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1996; Heelas, 1996). This governance/risk context, discussed in more detail below, relies on self-help/mutual aid and other voluntary institutions to serve the needs of citizens and the needs of the wider community simultaneously. But is this a realistic expectation?

Giving circles offer an opportunity to explore this question. Although seen by many as important sources of support for funding community needs (Eikenberry, 2006, 2008), giving circles might also be understood as self-help/mutual aid groups for wealthy and other philanthropists or want-to-be philanthropists. To tease out these dual purposes, the questions raised in this article are:

1. to what extent do giving circles serve as self-help/mutual aid groups oriented to resolving member’s needs; or
2. to what extent are they sources of support for community needs as forms of philanthropy to nonprofits and individuals in need; or
3. to what extent are giving circles an innovative hybrid of these two?

To address these questions, I rely on data gathered through interviews, document analysis, and secondary data (see description of methodology below). I make the argument, based on the data, that giving circles provide their greatest value as self-help/mutual aid sources for members. They do help nonprofits as well in their efforts to address community problems, but perhaps not to the degree necessary to fill gaps in today’s governance/risk environment. I conclude that we should see giving circles and other self-help/mutual aid institutions as important elements of society mostly because of their aid to members, and only secondarily to their aid to addressing collective problems in society. The implication is that there is still an important role for government to play in providing a base-line of support for citizens and the community.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. First, I describe the context in which giving circles have emerged to show the potential significance of their social impacts. Next, I discuss the research methodology, including an overview of “ideal” types of giving circles. Third, I give an overview of key giving circle characteristics and present data to address the research questions. Finally, I provide a discussion of the potential implications of these findings for thinking about giving circles and the impacts of self-help/mutual aid and voluntarism on society in today’s governance/risk environment.

THE CONTEXT: GOVERNANCE IN A RISK SOCIETY

The giving circle movement is but one example of new forms of organization and modes of participation becoming increasingly prominent in society today.

Scholars have documented the significant emergence of many informal, small, self-help, and support groups in the United States and around the world in recent decades (Archibald, 2007; Borkman, 1999; Borkman, Karlsson, Munn-Giddings, & Smith, 2005; Katz, 1993; Katz & Bender, 1976; Lavoie, Borkman, & Gidron, 1994; Wuthnow, 1994). For example, in a broad-based national study, Wuthnow (1994) found that 40% of the American adult population claimed to be involved in “a small group that meets regularly and provides caring and support for those who participate in it” (p. 45). These groups included bible study groups, self-help groups, book discussion groups, money clubs, social networks, and so on. Wuthnow writes that these groups seem to attract people who are fed up with large-scale institutions as well as those who want to combat the breakdown of traditional support structures (see also Reinerman, 1995, p. 104; Riessman & Carroll, 1995, p. 17; Smith & Pillemer, 1983). As an example of this, Archibald (2007) notes that self-help groups, especially those related to healthcare, emerged to provide for the needs of people who could not afford or get help otherwise; these groups arose to address gaps in healthcare services (p. 5).

Indeed, society today is increasingly characterized by the dissolution of traditional parameters and support systems. In Lacanian terms, we are witnessing the end of the “symbolic order” (Catlaw, 2006, p. 267). That is, we are in the midst of the detraditionalization of society, which “involves a shift of authority: from ‘without to within.’ It entails the decline of the belief in pre-given or natural orders of things. Individual subjects are themselves called upon to exercise authority in the face of the disorder and contingency which is thereby generated” (Heelas, 1996, p. 2). In this context, individuals must make choices today about everything: “lifestyles, partner types, politics and the like . . . [while] traditional structures of authority are no longer regarded as valid sources of norms” (Gundelach & Torpe, 1997, p. 54). Thus, this shift to a de-traditionalized society is also a shift to a risk society in that individuals must increasingly rely on themselves rather than larger societal institutions, such as the welfare state, for survival (Ellison, 1997, p. 711). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1996) write that “for the sake of human survival, individuals are compelled to make themselves the centre of their own life plans and conduct” (Beck, 1992, p. 92).

One reaction by individuals to this environment has been to seek out new identities and ways to cope with living in a risk society through engaging with other individuals, but in ways that match their personal interests, that are useful to their hectic lives, and that they can control (Bang & Sørensen, 1999; Gundelach & Torpe, 1996; Macduff, 2005; Wuthnow, 1994, 1998). This is reflected among giving circle members (see below).

As indicated in the introduction, the emergence of a risk society has at least partly been compelled by the transformation of political systems around the world in recent decades: from hierarchically organized, unitary systems of *government* and state-centered action, to more horizontally organized and relatively fragmented systems of *governance* (Pierre, 2000; Rhodes, 1994; Sørensen, 2000),

where voluntary institutions and individuals are expected to take responsibility for their own welfare (even while living in a social system over which one seems to have more and more choice but less and less control (Nickel & Eikenberry, 2007)). While this shift to governance is not exactly new, it is “increasingly regarded as an effective and legitimate form of societal governance” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005, p. 205). The move to governance is undoubtedly part of a larger agenda—perhaps emerging most clearly when Ronald Reagan famously proclaimed in his 1981 inaugural address that “government is not the solution to our problem” (followed a few years later by Margaret Thatcher’s proclamation “that there is no such thing as society”) and continuing through today—that has advocated for less taxes, fewer social welfare subsidies, and more private, voluntary, and individualistic approaches to addressing social problems. The driving force behind this model is an assumption that political and economic life is a matter of individual freedom and initiative and so free-market society and a minimal state are key objectives (Peters, 1996, pp. 22-28). In this context, voluntarism has taken center stage, offered as a utopian “middle way” (Giddens, 1994) by which we supposedly can achieve both liberty and fraternity, maintain individual rights, and meet social needs.

But can voluntarism offer such a utopian middle way? Giving circles offer a rich opportunity to examine the abilities of self-help/mutual aid and voluntary action to meet human needs and enhance human well-being while also addressing collective problems. Giving circles are voluntary associations devoted to providing philanthropic resources to support individuals, organizations, and communities. They also provide a support system for members. A study of their societal contributions may offer insight into the ability of self-help/mutual aid voluntary associations and philanthropy to address community needs while also meeting members’ needs. Thus,

1. to what extent do giving circles serve as self-help/mutual aid groups oriented to resolving their member’s needs; or
2. to what extent are they sources of support for community needs as forms of philanthropy to nonprofits and individuals in need; or
3. to what extent are giving circles an innovative hybrid of these two?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The approach to data collection and analysis followed a qualitative and grounded, naturalistic approach (Charmaz, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that was exploratory in nature. Data primarily came from two phases of research. The first phase involved a study of the giving circle movement, mostly in the United States, gathering data from 30 personal and telephone interviews with giving circle members/staff and philanthropic professionals working with giving circles, documentation published by giving circles and the popular press, and

secondary data. The focus was to understand the nature of giving circles and their democratic effects. This phase started by creating a database of giving circles that included information in part or in whole for 188 giving circles. Groups included in the database were those that described themselves, or were described by others, as giving circles. Excluded were donor circles—fundraising efforts initiated by a particular charity where donors have no significant voice in how the funds are used. The characteristics of membership fee, organizational structure and size, and giving circle activities were used to preliminarily categorize giving circles in order to choose an interview sample.

From this categorization, a sample was drawn to gain maximum information about giving circles' processes and impacts across different types of giving circles. Twenty-three giving circle members or staff representing 16 giving circles (8 members interviewed belonged to one giving circle) and 7 philanthropic professionals (5 were not affiliated with any one type of giving circle) were purposefully selected to be interviewed. Interviews took place between April and September 2004 and ranged in length from 20 minutes to 2 hours. An interview protocol was used and questions were conversational in an attempt to get the participant to discuss further something he/she has mentioned. Giving circle members were asked about giving circle processes and funding recipients, their experience in the giving circle and the impacts of the giving circle on their own giving and relationships with others in the community.⁵ Philanthropic professionals were asked to discuss what they saw as key aspects of giving circles, what kinds of people participate, and what the impacts of participation seem to have had on members. News articles, websites, and other documents written about giving circles were also analyzed, found through Google, Lexus-Nexus, and other article database searches. In addition, secondary data came from a survey conducted by the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers (Rutnik & Bearman, 2005) and from several published case studies of various giving circles (Ahn, 2003; Elias, 1998; Guthrie, Preston, & Bernholz, 2003; Orloff, 2002; Rutnik & Beaudoin-Schwartz, 2003; Sbarbaro, 2002). Finally, participant observation in one giving circle was conducted to inform the design and structure of the study.

Based on the data gathered in phase one of the study, and described above, a typology of giving circles was created that includes three "ideal types": small groups; loose networks; and formal organizations (see Table 1). This typology was used to inform phase two of the study.

The second phase of the research involved interviewing 18 nonprofit professionals (executive and development directors primarily) about their experience working with giving circles in the United States. This phase involved *updating*

⁵ For a full list of interview questions for both phases of the study, please e-mail the author or see appendix in Eikenberry, 2009.

Table 1. Three Types of Giving Circles and Their Key Characteristics

Type/Category	Small Groups 41 identified (22% of all GCs)	Loose Networks 49 identified (26% of all GCs)	Formal Organizations 86 identified (46% of all GCs)
Number of members	5-25 people, ave 13 people per group	2-140 people, number fluctuates	5-500 people, ave 84 people per group
Gender of Members	Half women only; half mixed gender	Mostly women	Mostly mixed gender
Member Fee per Year	Range \$50-\$5,000 or discretionary	None, discretionary	Approx \$250-\$5,500
Organization Structure	Shared leadership, closed membership (few with staff support)	Informal network, people come in and out with core group leading (volunteers only)	Formal (many with staff support), committees, focus on growth
Grant Decision-Making	All participate	Board or lead group	Committee (in some, members ratify)
Major Activities	Social and educational	Social and fundraising	Educational and volunteer engagement
Affiliation	Community foundation or other organization serves as fiscal agent and/or provides staff support	National affiliation to headquarters or part of movement	Affiliated with community foundation, other organization, or Independent 501(c)(3)
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AsiaNextGen • New River Valley Change Network • Shared Giving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread for the Journey • Dining for Women • Party with purpose • Womenade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omaha Venture Group • Social Venture Partners • Washington Women's Foundation

Note: Twelve giving circles in the database were not included in the three categories due to insufficient information.

the giving circle database and creating a new database of giving circle funding recipients using data from interviews and documentation from earlier studies of giving circles, as well as through a new search for information using the Internet and article search engines. This grantee database included data for 1,333 grants made to 878 nonprofit (and a few public or quasi-public) organizations and 160 individuals, given by 116 giving circles (see Table 2). At the time, this number (116) represented about half of the giving circles identified in the *updated* giving circle database. Complete information was not available for the amounts of all grants (we were able to find this information for 987 or 52% of the grants made). The data available shows that at least \$28 million was given between 1996 and 2005.

From this funding recipient database, a purposefully selected sample was chosen, representing organizations funded by the three types of giving circles identified above—small groups, loose networks, and formal organizations—as well as different organizational budget sizes and fields (e.g., arts, human services, education). The sample included 17 organizations: four of these organizations were funded by two giving circles and one funded by three giving circles (see Table 3). Representatives from each of the nonprofit funding recipients in the sample were interviewed by telephone. Interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 1 hour and 17 minutes and took place from June to August 2006. The interviewing approach followed a similar procedure described above but asked questions about interviewees' experience working with a giving circle, this experience related to other types of fundraising, impacts giving circle had on their organization, and strategies and recommendations for working with giving circles.

For both phases of the study, MAX QDA qualitative data analysis software was used to systematically organize, code, and analyze data. Each phase of study was coded separately and for each, analysis followed an approach set out by Maxwell (1998) that involved an iterative process of contextualizing and categorizing strategies. This process included: reading interviews and other documents completely through to get a sense of the whole; re-reading interviews and other documents and coding segments; re-coding and grouping codes into broad clusters of similar topics or nodes, primarily around the research questions for each study phase, though allowing for emergent topics. These clusters were then iteratively re-coded into more specific and simplified nodes, creating "trees" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 29). This process continued until no new codes emerged. Finally, codes were regrouped again around themes relevant to the research questions. The findings below report on themes culled from the coding of data described above and represent only part of the major themes identified in each study phase, represented in relation to the focus of this article.

The triangulated use of multiple interviews and document analysis, looking for and analyzing negative cases, and using more than one researcher to analyze and discuss the data, helped to assure greater trustworthiness of the data (Borman,

Table 2. Characteristics of Giving Circle Funding Recipients by Field, 1996–2005

	Human service	Public benefit	Education	Arts & Culture	Health	Environment and animals	International	Religion
# Grants	518	139	237	176	100	50	46	22
% Total Grants	40	10.8	18.3	13.6	7.7	3.9	3.6	1.7
\$ Received	7,446,769	876,934	15,692,772	2,663,939	566,098	562,284	328,965	269,187
% Total \$	26.2	3.1	55.3	9.4	1.9	2.0	1.2	1.0

Note: Eighty of the grants represent funding recipients with multiple fields so the percentages are accurate for the overall population.

Table 3. Characteristic of Funding Recipient Interview Sample, by Field

Funding recipients by field (<i>N</i> = 17)	Funding recipients by size	GCs providing funding by type (<i>N</i> = 23+)
Human Service (<i>N</i> = 6; 35.2%)	Small-3 Medium-2 Large-1	Small Groups-4 Loose Networks-2
Education (<i>N</i> = 4; 23.5%)	Small-4	Loose Networks-1 Formal Orgs-7
Arts (<i>N</i> = 3; 17.6%)	Small-1 Medium-2	Formal Orgs-4
Health (<i>N</i> = 2; 11.8%)	Small-1 Medium-1	Small Groups-2
Environment (<i>N</i> = 1; 5.9%)	Small/Medium-1	Formal Orgs-1
Public Benefit (<i>N</i> = 1; 5.9%)	Small-1	Small Groups-1

LeCompte, & Goetz, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Theoretical validation was also sought through regular presentation and discussion of emerging conclusions with colleagues (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). For the second phase of the study, coding was done by two researchers to increase inter-coder reliability.

Finally, in addition to the two phases described above, more recent data on the U.K.-based Funding Network and other internationally-based giving circles were gathered through targeted document and website analysis. These documents were not coded but were systematically reviewed and analyzed, comparing and contrasting this data with earlier findings.

FINDINGS

The findings discussed below are reported by major themes that emerged from both phases of the study and which are relevant to the questions addressed in this article. The coding categories were different for each phase of the study, but several themes overlapped, as noted below, enabling some conclusions to be drawn about the contributions of giving circles to members and the community.

Key Characteristics of Giving Circles

Giving circles come in many shapes, sizes, and foci so it is difficult to give them an exact definition. As one of the philanthropic professionals interviewed said, “I think that’s what makes giving circles exciting, that there is no one mold or model that you have to be in. It is very much based on the people who start them and who are at the table” (Philanthropic Professional #6, telephone interview, July 7, 2004). Combining data from interviews, secondary data, and other documentation, it is possible to describe at least five major dimensions of giving circles. Generally, they: pool and give away resources; educate members about philanthropy and issues in the community; include a social dimension; engage members; and maintain their independence.

Pool and Collectively Give Away Resources

One of the main functions of giving circles is to enable individuals to pool their resources and then collectively give these away. Of the giving circles for which data were available at the time of the study (152 groups out of 188 in the database), 40% required no or a very loosely suggested minimum fee, leaving the making of a contribution and its amount up to the discretion of the individual participant. For example, members of the New River Valley Change Network decided when the group started to collectively set a goal of \$100 per year per member but no one keeps track of how much money each person puts in the collection bowl at each meeting. Other giving circles (about 12%) had multiple giving levels where, for example, a member could join at the \$1,500 or \$5,000 level. Finally, several giving circles raise money from outside of their membership. For example, most Bread for the Journey (BFJ) affiliates conduct fund-raising events and send out newsletters asking others to contribute to a pooled fund, while members of the Omaha Venture Group, a formal organization young leader fund, solicit funds from other local foundations and donors to match members’ contributions.

There is variation as to where, to whom, and how giving circles provide funds. Generally, giving circles give to nonprofit organizations, individuals doing good work (who are not affiliated with a particular organization), and individuals in need. If funding nonprofit organizations, giving circles generally are interested in small, grassroots organizations because they want to make a big impact with their funding. Some giving circles, in particular BFJ affiliates, tend to give money directly to people they see or hear about who are doing good work in the community. For example, one BFJ group, after reading about a high school student that fixed up old computers and then gave them to a local youth group home, met with the student and then, on the spot, wrote him a check for a few hundred dollars so he could continue his work (Loose Network #1, telephone interview, August 30, 2004). Finally, some giving circles, especially many Womenade groups, give funding and other in-kind support directly to individuals

in need, such as a homeless woman who, for example, needs help paying for new eyeglasses (Loose Network #2, personal interview, August 10, 2004).

Educate Members

Another key aspect of most giving circles is their educational component; specifically, informal and formal education about philanthropy and education about issues in the community. Education about philanthropy takes place informally through the running of the giving circle and giving away of money—that is, tracking donors, learning about the grant making process, going on site visits, and so on—and more formally through educational sessions such as workshops, seminars, and presentations by guest speakers. All types of giving circles participate to varying degrees in the former but it is mainly the larger, more formal giving circles that feature a comprehensive educational program. Education about issues in the community also takes place on an informal and formal basis. Informally, members of all types of giving circles, to varying degrees, learn about issues in the community through group discussions, independent research, or site visits and visiting with nonprofit staff or individuals doing good work. Some giving circles also have very formal educational programming on issue topics. For example, one formal organization giving circle made up of young professionals has four educational forums each year featuring guest speakers and panelists: from policy specialists to nonprofit professionals to gang members (Formal Organization #5, telephone interview, August 30, 2004).

Provide Social Opportunities

There is also a strong social component associated with giving circles. Of course, whenever a group of people comes together to do anything, there is social interaction; giving circles are no exception. However, in some giving circles, the social aspect is a primary focus. For example, the Everychild Foundation in Pacific Palisades, California, creates opportunities throughout the year where members can network and socialize. As they state on their website: “A strong goal of the Foundation is to build a *community* of women who enjoy working together” (Everychild Foundation, n.d., para. 3). There are similar opportunities in other larger, more formal giving circles such as those trying to attract young professionals. Indeed a member of a young leader group I interviewed lamented that “the social piece tends to be a little bit more popular than the educational pieces” (Formal Organization #6, personal interview, September 3, 2004). Members of smaller, informal giving circles repeatedly brought up the social aspect of the giving circle as an important element of their experience. In some cases, especially among women’s giving circles, the driving force of the group is its “social with a purpose” aspect. The reason for this was summed up in a news article on giving circles: “in the end, that’s the real power of giving circles: a

rare chance for busy women to enjoy each other's company while doing good" (Kennedy, 2002, p. 75). There are times when it appears that socializing in the group sometimes nearly takes over the charitable aspect of the group. As a philanthropic professional and member of a small group giving circle said:

I mean it's amazing how fast the group has bonded. We all have commented on that. Some of the people knew one another quite well and others, you know, only knew a couple people . . . it took us about two meetings, I would say, at most three and everybody was just like, I don't know if we're even going to have time to hear about the . . . charity because there was just wonderful synergy that happened. (Philanthropic Professional #1, personal interview, April 22, 2004)

Engage Members

There is almost always a strong voluntary engagement aspect to giving circles. Even in cases where there is some staff support, giving circles are largely volunteer-driven. Especially among the less formal type of giving circles, volunteers conduct all aspects of the giving circle's administration. Members are also engaged in the grant making process, either by choosing to be on a committee or as part of the entire group. With a few giving circles there is also direct volunteer engagement with nonprofit agencies. For example, SVP members can choose to work directly with grantees on various management and technology projects. It is often the more formally structured and larger giving circles that tend to encourage these volunteer opportunities with members.

Maintain Independence

Finally, there is an element of independence associated with giving circles—they are typically not tied to any one charity and it is the members, rather than nonprofit or philanthropic professionals or experts, who decide where funds should be distributed. To clarify this a bit further, consider the practice among many nonprofit organizations to create what are called "donor circles." These are groupings of donors based on their level of giving to the organization. For example, any donor who gives \$1,000 or more is placed in the "Gold Circle" and receives special benefits from the nonprofit organization like newsletters, invitations to events, and so on. These donors *do not* have a say in how this money is distributed. Giving circles are *not* donor circles. They typically do not give money to one particular charity and they do involve members, deciding together, in where to give resources away. There are exceptions to this, however. A few giving circles are associated with university foundations, for example, where the members within these giving circles remain independent in that they still decide where the money is given, but are limited to giving the money within the university. It is not clear that these groups should indeed count as giving

circles except that they are largely donor-led and share some of the other aspects of giving circles discussed above.

Giving Circles as Self-Help/Mutual Aid?

Members describe several reasons for joining and staying in giving circles that support a self-help/mutual aid thesis (see Table 4), much like the recent emergence of several other self-help/mutual aid groups for those trying to figure out what to do with their surplus income and wealth (Bick, 2007; Rivlin, 2007; Urschel, 2005). Indeed, there seem to be few reasons individuals participate in giving circles beyond their own personal benefit; only a few say they participate intentionally to effect social change or because of the funding focus of the group. Yet, most giving circles do not seem to be very intentional about promoting or consciously bolstering this self-help/mutual aid aspect of the giving circle. One

Table 4. Why People Participate in Giving Circles

Reasons given in interviews or documents	# of times mentioned (non-duplicative)
Direct, hands on engagement in giving	12
To leverage funds/feel part of a bigger group	12
It is fun	9
To socialize	6
To learn about nonprofits/the community	5
To feel empowered	5
To learn about philanthropy	5
To feel more/immediately satisfied/impact	5
It feels good	4
It is not bureaucratic	4
To socialize with purpose	4
It is easy	3
To feel like making a difference	3
It is an anonymous/safe space	3
To effect social change	3
For spiritual/personal enrichment	2
Funding focus	1
Friends/colleagues participate	1

exception is the SVP model, where staff and leaders have realized that “SVP may be more about *creating processes or avenues for individuals to grow and learn* than it is about creating a finished product” such as growing funding for nonprofit organizations (Social Venture Partners Seattle, 2006, p. 3, emphasis in original). In response, SVP Seattle created a “Philanthropy Development Framework” for helping members in their personal philanthropic development. The framework consists of seven topic areas: financial planning and giving vehicles; values, motivation and integration; issues; nonprofit sector; cultural competency; volunteering; and grant making. SVP Seattle provides workshops and other educational forums to support growth in these areas.

Nonetheless, giving circles do seem to follow a long tradition of self-help/mutual aid (Katz & Bender, 1976). Compare giving circles with the definition of a self-help group offered by Kurtz (1997):

A self-help group is a supportive, educational, usually change-oriented mutual-aid group that addresses a single life problem or condition shared by all members. Its purpose may be personal or societal change or both, achieved through the use of ideologies for dealing with a situation. Its leadership is indigenous to the group’s members; participation and contributions are voluntary—it charges no fees. Professionals rarely have an active role in the group’s activities, unless they participate as members. Boundaries include all who qualify for membership by having the problem, the situation, or an identity in common with other members. Meetings are structured and task-oriented and use specific methods of help for the basic problem or condition. Local groups are usually relatively autonomous from their national headquarters. (p. 4)

This self-help definition also includes a mutual aid element. Mutual aid, as Borkman (1999) defines it, involves “individuals joining together to assist one another either emotionally, socially, or materially” (p. 5).

Giving circles do offer members a chance to support each other in the “problem” of giving away money and otherwise addressing the need to be more engaged in the community. As Table 4 indicates, one of the most often cited reasons members say they participate in giving circles is the chance to become more engaged in the giving process—engaged with nonprofit organizations as well as “with others asking the same questions, perhaps giving to the same causes” (The Funding Network, n.d., para. 1). They also participate because they want to feel like they are part of a larger effort that will leverage their giving. Individuals also say they participate because they want to learn more about nonprofit organizations or issues in the community. Women especially bring up the attraction that giving circles hold as a tool for individual empowerment as well as for “being social while doing good.” Many members say they are also attracted to the safety and anonymity the giving circle provides—they see the giving circle as providing a place to ask questions and learn the “ins and outs” of grant making. Some also expressed the importance of the spiritual aspect

of participating in the giving circle. This was indicated by one giving circle member who said:

I've been trying for some years to figure out how to be or what it would feel like to be a more generous person and challenging myself in different ways. Of course that's not just with money, but, you know, all kinds of ways, and this seemed like a good opportunity to put that spiritual discipline into practice for me. (Shared Giving #8, personal interview, May 20, 2004)

Finally, many giving circle members described the importance of the fun and social aspects of the group as reason for joining and staying in their giving circle.

Like most self-help/mutual aid groups, giving circles are completely voluntary and for the most part volunteer-driven and volunteer-led (though some groups, like SVP Seattle, have staff to help facilitate the process). They are also mostly independent, autonomous groups (even though some do have loose national affiliations like Dining for Women, SVP, the Funding Network, and the Community Investment Network (a network of giving circles made up mostly African-American members located in the southeastern United States)). Giving circles certainly share the self-help ethos of anti-big, anti-bureaucratic, and anti-impersonality, favoring experience over expertise while reaffirming the traditions of community, neighborhood, spiritual values, and self-reliance (Kurtz, 1997, p. 11). Indeed, many members, especially those in loose networks, say they appreciate the simple, non-bureaucratic nature of the giving circle model. For instance, one philanthropic professional affiliated with a loose network put it this way:

[Members] get to create what they want and . . . they want to have that freedom I think to be able to come and go as they please. Because there is no overhead with [the giving circle] there are no monthly bills they have to meet so there is no reason to keep the wheel turning. If life ebbs and it's time to not be together for a couple of months because there are other things more pressing, well then they don't have to answer to anybody to do that. (Philanthropic Professional #7, telephone interview, August 16, 2004)

In addition, like self-help groups, social learning takes place in giving circles through instruction, reinforcement, and modeling (Kurtz & Powell, 1987). Many groups have guest speakers who educate on areas of expertise, while interactions among members provide natural reinforcement for the approved behavior of voluntary giving; members can serve as role models for newcomers (Kurtz, 1997, p. 15). Giving circles are also infused with an ideology that puts great store in the importance of voluntary giving and influencing members with this ideology.

Giving circles are *different* from typical self-help/mutual aid groups in that most charge some kind of a fee (or ask for a voluntary contribution) to participate, but this is mostly given away to others outside of the group. In addition, meetings

are not necessarily as structured or task-oriented as most self-help/mutual aid groups such as Kurtz's definition above suggests (at least this is especially the case for less formal giving circles). Finally, one might argue that giving circles differ from self-help groups in that members do not suffer from any immediate disadvantage (Archibald, 2007, p. 30). However, one might also say that members of giving circles do suffer from isolation and perhaps the need to feel good and to be engaged with the community or "give back" in some way.

Giving Circles as Resources for Funding Recipients and Addressing Community Needs?

Most giving circles' stated foci are on giving away resources and otherwise increasing the charitable resources provided to nonprofit organizations and individuals in need or doing good work. Recent research by Bearman (2007) estimates that giving circles have given away more than \$68 million over the course of their existence. Data from this study also show that many giving circle members donate a substantial amount of time to funding recipients. However, to what degree giving circles increase and provide resources to where they are most needed in communities—that is, to address identified collective problems—is questionable. We can examine this by looking at the capacity for different types of giving circles to address community problems by how their resources are distributed.

Formal organization giving circles probably do the most to comprehensively address collective community problems. This is because, generally, members in formal organizations take a systematic approach to becoming educated about an *issue area* and who is doing what within that area in a community. They then try to focus their resources on filling gaps in a particular area (see Figure 1). An example is SVP Seattle, which has instituted a very systematic process for educating themselves about an issue area and then targeting organizations working in the area to seek funding from SVP. Small group giving circle members, though still attempting to educate themselves, are less comprehensive in trying to understand an issue area and the actors trying to address problems in this area. Generally, they are more focused on *organizations* rather than issues. They look closely at whatever organization happens to come across the members' radar screen, so to speak, and then the issues related to that organization and decide on funding based on this limited information. An example is Shared Giving—this group does not have rules as such about deciding what to fund. One member described the group as operating in a "stealthy fashion" where members seek out organizations and projects (Shared Giving #1, personal interview, May 17, 2004). Finally, loose network giving circles are for the most part focused on funding *individuals*. They are generally not systematic at all about understanding issues or organizations; rather they provide (often emergency) assistance in reaction to referrals or stories about individuals in need or doing good work. For example,

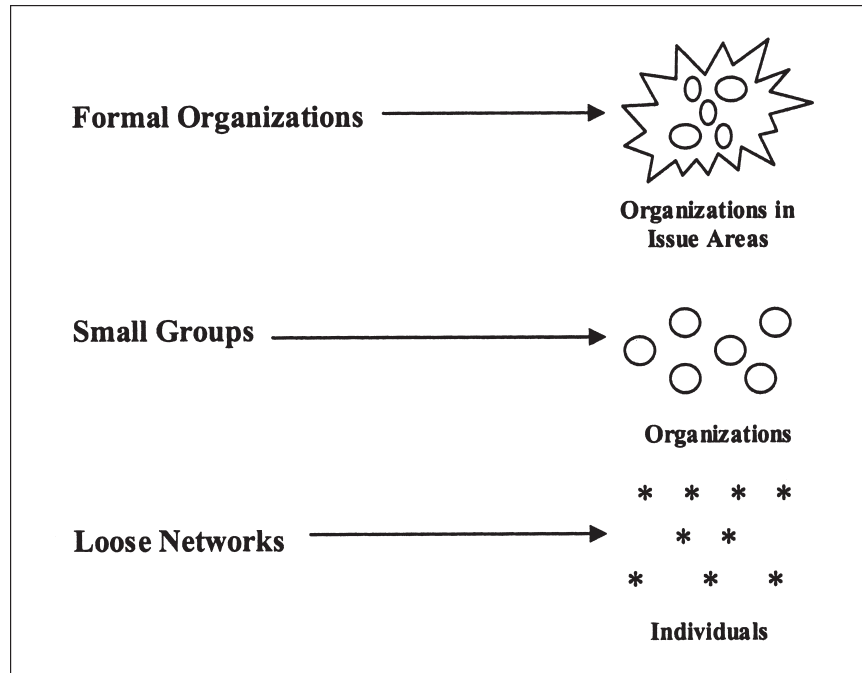


Figure 1. The funding focus of giving circles by type.

BFJ affiliates give people money to implement good ideas: like the high school student rebuilding computers for foster children, the retired man who makes stained-glass angels in his garage and takes them to children's hospitals, and the teacher who created an organic garden to educate her students. Or Womenade groups give to individuals in need for heating bills, groceries, etc.

Finding funding and volunteer opportunities can be a struggle for all types of giving circles. Small groups like Shared Giving, for instance, have had difficulty finding the "best" organizations that have a real need for their help. Part of this, according to several of those interviewed, is due to members' lack of capacity to search out organizations. Jovanovic, Carlone, and Massood (2004, p. 12) also found with the young leader funds they studied that members lamented the lack of time available to do all the investigative work they would like to do to find the "right" organizations to fund. Another problem is that the nonprofit organizations giving circle members approach about funding, because they tend to be small and locally-based, do not always seem to be ready for support from giving circles. For example, a SVP affiliate ran into the problem of not being able to convince nonprofit organizations to even apply for funding when they started. A staff person and member described their experience:

In that year, since it was our first, we did invite applications. . . . The invitation said we're a new grant maker and we will be dispersing between \$30,000 and \$50,000 for general operating support, come find out about it and two people said they would come. I had our investment committee . . . [call] the other 58 and some of the organizations hung up on them! . . . This is one of the biggest lessons learned . . . we can bring in all kinds of great things to our centers, programs, fieldtrips, everything, computers, but unless we have the staff to back it up and implement it all we might as well not bother. (Formal Organization #9, telephone interview, July 19, 2004)

Loose networks like Womenade have also struggled to make nonprofit organizations understand their intentions, as in the case of a Womenade in Nixa, Missouri. It found several nonprofit organizations "less than enthusiastic about the Womenade idea" (Atteberry Smith, 2002, para. 17) when they approached them to give away the money they raised. In another Womenade group, members had a hard time at first convincing local nonprofit organizations to help connect the group to people in need because the nonprofit organizations did not understand that they wanted to *give* money away rather than get something from the organization (Loose Network #2, personal interview, August 10, 2004).

Related to this, a member of a young leader fund commented on the difficulty the group has each year finding substantive volunteer experiences for members. Nonprofit professionals also admit that the giving circle model focused on high engagement is not always a great fit for their organization. For instance, sometimes organizations might be in a stage where they do not need volunteers. According to one executive director who leads an organization that has been funded by two formal organization giving circles:

I would discourage groups [giving circles] from saying: "Okay we're going to give money *and* we're going to get involved." I think they should say: "We're going to give money and get involved if that's what the nonprofit needs." You know, like in our history there's been times where we really needed [volunteers] . . . like in the beginning and now we are up and running and we don't really use volunteers for much of anything because we would prefer not to do it that way. (Nonprofit Professional #7, telephone interview, June 19, 2006)

Thus, while there is some degree of resource re-distribution by giving circles to small, grassroots-type organizations or individuals in need or doing good work, it is not clear that these resources are getting to the areas that are most needed. The more informal the organization, the more fragmented this becomes. Even with more formal giving circles, the resources they bring to bear on these problems amounts to only a fraction of what is likely needed to address these community problems: The \$68 million that giving circles have given away over the course of their existence is only a fraction of the \$260 billion given privately in the United States in 2005 alone (Giving USA, 2006), and an even smaller percentage of what government has spent on social welfare-related areas. Private

donations to charitable organizations have traditionally represented less than 10% of the federal government's spending on welfare (Boris & Steuerle, 1999).

Some of the nonprofit professionals interviewed who received support from giving circles indicate that there seems to be a tension between meeting their organizations' needs—such as funding for general operating costs or for needs that are not of special interest to members but are needed by nonprofit funding recipients—and meeting the needs of giving circle members (the self-help/mutual aid aspect of giving circles)—such as enabling members to engage in the community. Indeed, from the perspective of these nonprofit professionals, the self-help/mutual aid component of the giving circle is often the most dominant aspect of their relationship with the giving circle. For example, an executive director described how an emphasis on “protecting” the members of the giving circle could outweigh many of the benefits they received from the giving circle:

They have an approach that makes it seem like “Oh my God this is going to change your whole life.” You know, it really, it just doesn't because the challenge for nonprofits especially at this stage is to cultivate individual donors and they have access to so many. And, when you want to send anything to anyone you've ever met there, you have to call and ask, they will not give you contact information. (Nonprofit Professional #4, telephone interview, June 14, 2006)

The Funding Network in London also markets itself to members as a way to “protect” individual donors because they “can contribute to projects without fearing that they will be ‘pestered’ later, as TFN keeps attendees' details confidential” (McLean, 2005, para. 1-2). This is certainly not the case with every giving circle, but it is a frequent enough issue that one-third of nonprofit professionals interviewed brought up lack of transparency and openness as a key challenge to working with giving circles (Nonprofit professionals #4, 6, 7, 9, 13, 16).

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Giving circles, then, are more than just funding agents, they are, perhaps more importantly and predominantly, groups meant to meet the needs of members. Although one might say that giving circles are an innovative hybrid of self-help/mutual aid as well as a resource for nonprofits and community benefit, the two aspects of meeting members' needs and meeting community needs can also be in conflict. For example, nonprofit organizations generally cannot depend upon giving circles for continual or long-term support because of the need for the giving circle to keep members excited and engaged in the process. This was highlighted by one nonprofit executive director who noted:

The giving circles . . . their motivations are a little more complex. They need to keep a membership interested and engaged and all that stuff and people say, “Ah, we've been funding [organization name] for three years,

let's go fund some other group, you know, I heard of this one great group blah, blah, blah" and then they're off onto the next thing. (Nonprofit Professional #7, telephone interview, June 19, 2006)

However, if we see the greatest benefit of giving circles as what they do for members through self-help/mutual aid, and it appears that this is a primary reason for members to participate in giving circles, this may change our understanding of what these and other voluntary institutions might be able to do to address problems in the community and enhance human well-being in a governance/risk society.

We can look to self-help/mutual aid groups, such as giving circles, as important to society in their own right for what they offer to members and potential members. For instance, like other self-help/mutual aid groups, the alternative ideologies offered by giving circles can "promote the democratization of everyday life through demystification of professional authority combined with antielitism" (Archibald, 2007, p. 9). Giddens (1992) describes this as the "transformation of intimacy" and "democratization of the private sphere" (in McGee, 2005, p. 186). Giving circles do this in relation to organized philanthropy by demystifying the philanthropic process and enabling individuals to do something charitable on their own and in their own way. This is similar to the case of health-focused self-help/mutual aid groups where "constituents disillusioned with the dominant healthcare system can design their own healthcare service delivery mechanisms in the form of self-help groups" (Archibald, 2007, p. 8; see also Borkman, 1991; Katz, 1993; Powell, 1994; Riessman & Carroll, 1995). Collectively, these self-help/mutual aid groups can provide a public service by providing an alternative narrative to professionalized bureaucracy that is more collectivistic-democratic (Borkman, 1999, 2006; Milofsky, 1988) because, as Archibald (2007) notes, "self-help relies on the experiential authority of its members and is radically democratic in promoting mutual trust and reciprocity among group members with a shared common condition" (p. 9).

Even though Reinerman (1995) argues that self-help groups personalize problems rather than, as C. Wright Mills would have liked, transform private troubles into public issues (p. 98), self-help/mutual aid groups may also empower members to lead more productive lives in the wider world and thus enable individuals to be more active in their communities. Indeed, Wuthnow (1994) notes that people who are overcome by their own problems tend to be too afraid of what may happen to risk helping others. They may fear being rejected or failing. They may feel their time, and even their money, must be safeguarded. However, being in a self-help/mutual aid group can give them greater confidence in themselves and in the future and, thus, may enhance the community by freeing individuals from their own insecurities so that they can reach out more charitably toward other people. Wuthnow's research shows that self-help groups do extend their help to others outside their immediate circle. In a survey of group members, nearly two in three said they have "worked with the group to help other people

in need outside of the group” (p. 320). Almost as many claimed to have donated money to charitable organizations other than their church or synagogue because of their group and half said they got involved in volunteer work in the community because of the group. Giving circles certainly empower members to be more engaged in their giving and understanding of the community.

Yet, we must also keep in mind that these groups, including giving circles, do not require great social or personal sacrifice. Rather, they provide a kind of social interaction that busy, rootless people can grasp without making significant adjustments in their lifestyles. In such a porous environment, it is easy to walk away from unsatisfying or difficult situations and not participate again (Wuthnow, 1994, p. 189). In this regard, Irvine (1999) describes self-help/mutual aid groups, like Codependents Anonymous (CoDA), as “institution lite”: the organization allows the personalities that come within the circle to determine how much of their lives it will encompass (p. 70). Members have freedom to participate in maintaining a particular atmosphere or move to one they find more suitable; they want to be part of something bigger but they do not want that something to necessarily demand obedience and sacrifice. She writes that:

The norm that allows people to determine what is “right” for them clearly allows tremendous freedom. At the same time, however, since that norm is the group’s one absolute, the members never establish any collective sense of right and wrong, or better and worse. No precedent of “how things are done here” is ever established, except to say that you are free to believe whatever you want. (p. 77)

Giving circles do not seem to be as porous in their memberships as Irvine indicates of CoDA, except perhaps in the case of loose networks; however, there is a strong sense of their voluntary nature—that people go to them voluntarily and only stay as long as it is useful, affordable, and of interest for them to do so. Self-help/mutual aid groups are voluntary (Borkman, 1999) and it is the nature of voluntarism to be the “free space” in which democratic attitudes are cultivated and democratic behavior is conditioned (Barber, 1998, p. 6). If a higher authority like the government were to make or command these groups to behave in a certain way, they would lose their voluntary and democratic nature, and thus the basis for the important contributions they make to members and society. Their inherent value as voluntary institutions would be compromised. This is probably not something most of us would want to have happen. Yet, the environment in which these groups increasingly exist is one in which individualization and risk are the norm; where traditional social structures and government concern for citizens have eroded, and where individuals are left to cope on their own. Individualistic and voluntary responses might be okay if these groups were not also expected to be tools for enabling government to shed responsibility for addressing citizens’ collective needs.

Thus, self-help/mutual aid should not be seen as a substitute for collective public and political action. Philosophers such as Warren (2001) and Rosenblum (1998) conclude that it is the freedom of association that is integral to free human life and thus to creating a democratic society. It is the pluralistic nature of this freedom to associate that is significant. It follows logically that because the point of many kinds of association is precisely their freedom and spontaneity, state intervention cannot help but damage their effects (Tamir, 1998). As Warren (2001) notes: “Even if it were possible to encourage through law or incentives those groups that produce democratic effects, these strategies would endanger goods that are valuable in their own rights, the identity and character-forming goods that are irreducibly a part of the freedom of association” (p. 18). Voluntary associations such as self-help/mutual aid groups will contribute most to society if they are allowed the freedom to do as they wish while the state is made strong enough to develop and enforce a system of fundamental rights, protect zones of freedom within which associational life grows, and support citizens with enough basic income and services to ensure that they do not become dependent upon one or a few associations for their life necessities (Warren, 2001, p. 28). In the future, research should be done to more broadly evaluate the effects of participating in a giving circle on members and the areas they support. For now, given the data that is available, it seems that we should look to giving circles (and perhaps other self-help/mutual aid groups), as most valuable first for the benefits they bring to their members and only secondarily to what they might do for nonprofits and the community.

REFERENCES

- Ahn, R. (2003). *The Hestia Fund* (CR16-03-1691.0). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Kennedy School of Government Case Program.
- Archibald, M. E. (2007). *The evolution of self-help: How a health movement became an institution*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Atteberry Smith, S. (2002, 12 October). Missouri friends raise funds for medical clinic. *The Hannibal Courier Post*. Retrieved December 27, 2004 from http://www.hannibal.net/stories/101202/tri_1012020027.shtml
- Bang, H. P., & Sørensen, E. (1999). The everyday maker: A new challenge to democratic governance. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 21, 325-341.
- Barber, B. R. (1998). *A place for us: How to make society civil and democracy strong*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2001). *The individualized society*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bearman, J. E. (2007). *More giving together: The Growth and impact of giving circles and shared giving*. Washington, DC: Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers. Retrieved April 28, 2008 from: http://www.givingforum.org/s_forum/bin.asp?CID=611&DID=5316&DOC=FILE.PDF
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. New Delhi: Sage.

- Beck, U., & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1996). Individualization and 'precarious freedoms': Perspectives and controversies of a subject-oriented sociology. In P. Heelas, S. Lash, & P. Morris (Eds.), *Detraditionalization: Critical reflections on authority and identity* (pp. 23-48). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Bick, J. (2007, March 18). Write a check? The new philanthropist goes further. *The New York Times*.
- Boris, E., & Steuerle, E. (1999, October 1). What charities cannot do. *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11.
- Borman, K. M., LeCompte, M. D., & Goetz, J. P. (1986). Ethnographic and qualitative research design and why it doesn't work. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 30, 42-57.
- Borkman, T. (1991). Introduction. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 19, 643-650.
- Borkman, T. (1999). *Understanding self-help/mutual aid: Experiential learning in the commons*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Borkman, T. (2006). Sharing experiences, conveying hope: Egalitarian relations as the essential method of Alcoholics Anonymous. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 17, 145-161.
- Borkman, T., Karlsson, M., Munn-Giddings, C., & Smith, L. (2005). *Self-help and mental health: Case studies of mental health self-help organizations in US, UK, and Sweden*. Stockholm, Sweden: Skondal Institute and University.
- Buntin, J. (2004, June). Sugar daddy government. *Governing*. Retrieved September 19, 2006 from: <http://66.23.131.98/archive/2004/jun/billion.txt>
- Catlaw, T. J. (2006). Authority, representation, and the contradictions of posttraditional governing. *American Review of Public Administration*, 36, 261-287.
- Charles, J. A. (1993). *Service clubs in American society: Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- City of San Diego. (n.d.). *Philanthropy center*. Retrieved June 24, 2008 from: <http://www.sandiego.gov/philanthropycenter/>
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Curti, M. (1973). Philanthropy. In P. P. Wiener (Ed.), *Dictionary of the history of ideas: Studies of selected pivotal ideas, Vol. III* (pp. 486-493). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Eikenberry, A. M. (2006). Giving circles: Growing grassroots philanthropy. *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 35, 517-532.
- Eikenberry, A. M. (2008). Giving circles and fundraising in the new philanthropy environment. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 19, 141-152.
- Eikenberry, A. M. (2009). *Giving circles: Philanthropy, voluntary association, and democracy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Elias, J. (1998). *Social Venture Partners* (draft v3.01). Kansas City, MO: The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.
- Everychild Foundation. (n.d.). *Where the money will go and how to be involved*. Retrieved December 28, 2004 from <http://www.everychildfoundation.org/involvement.cfm>

- Ellison, N. (1997). Towards a new social politics: Citizenship and reflexivity in late modernity. *Sociology*, 31, 697-717.
- Ex-presidents launch private aid effort. (2005, January 4). *CNN.com*. Retrieved September 19, 2006 from: <http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/01/03/tsunami.presidents/>
- Giddens, A. (1992). *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Giddens, A. (1994). *Beyond left and right: The future of radical politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gingold, D. (2000, July). New frontiers in philanthropy. *Fortune.com*. Retrieved September 10, 2001 from <http://www.timeinc.net/fortune/sections/>
- Giving USA Foundation. (2006). *Giving USA 2006*. Glenview, IL: Giving USA Foundation.
- Gundelach, P., & Torpe, L. (1996). *Voluntary associations: New types of involvement and democracy*. Paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops. Oslo, Norway.
- Gundelach, P., & Torpe, L. (1997). Social reflexivity, democracy and new types of citizen involvement in Denmark. In J. W. Van Deth (Ed.), *Private groups and public life: Social participation, volunteer associations and political involvement in representative democracy* (pp. 47-63). London: Routledge.
- Guthrie, K., Preston, A., & Bernholz, L. (2003). *Transforming philanthropic transactions: An evaluation of the first five years at Social Venture Partners Seattle*. Retrieved April 2004 from: www.svpseattle.org
- Heelas, P. (1996). Introduction: Detraditionalization and its rivals. In P. Heelas, S. Lash, & P. Morris (Eds.), *Detraditionalization: Critical reflections on authority and identity* (pp. 1-20). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Huddleston, C. W., Freeman-Wilson, K., & Marlowe, D. (2005, May). *Painting the current picture: A national report card on drug courts and other problem solving court programs in the United States*. Alexandria, VA: National Drug Court Institute.
- Irvine, L. (1999). *Codependent forevermore: The invention of self in a twelve step group*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Jovanovic, S., Carlone, D., & Massood, C. (2004, February). *Voice and community engagement: A report of young leaders and philanthropy*. Unpublished manuscript. University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
- Katz, A. H. (1993). *Self-help in America: A social movement perspective*. New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Katz, A. H., & Bender, E. (Eds.). (1976). *The strength in us: Self-help groups in the modern world*. New York: New Viewpoints/Vision Books.
- Kennedy, M. (2002, December). Clubs with a cause. *Health*, pp. 72-75.
- Kiefer, J. J., & Montjoy, R. S. (2006). Incrementalism before the storm: Network performance for the evacuation of New Orleans. *Public Administration Review*, 66(Suppl), 122-130.
- Korelitz, J. H. (2002, August). Second helpings. *Real Simple*, pp. 85-90.
- Kurtz, L. F. (1997). *Self-help and support groups: A handbook for practitioners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kurtz, L. F., & Powell, T. J. (1987). Three approaches to understanding self-help groups. *Social Work with Groups*, 10, 69-80.
- Lavoie, F., Borkman, T., & Gidron, B. (Eds.). (1994). *Self-help and mutual aid groups: International and multicultural perspectives*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Macduff, N. (2005). Societal changes and the rise of the episodic volunteer. In J. L. Brudney (Ed.), *ARNOVA Occasional Paper Series, 1* (pp. 49-61). Indianapolis, IN: Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action.
- Mason, T. (2006, October). Pledge funds. *Professional Fundraising*, 26-27.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1998). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *Handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 69-100). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McCully, G. (2008). *Philanthropy reconsidered: Private initiatives, public good, quality of life*. Boston: Catalogue for Philanthropy.
- McGee, M. (2005). *Self-help, inc.: Makeover culture in American life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McLean, P. (2005, May 25). *Collective funding for social change*. *Oneworld.net*. Retrieved June 23, 2008 from: <http://uk.oneworld.net/article/view/112020/1/>
- Milofsky, C. (1988). Structure and process in community self-help organizations. In C. Milofsky (Ed.), *Community organizations: Studies in resource mobilization and exchange* (pp. 183-216). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mulder, L. (2008, March 28). *Affects of court referrals on Alano Clubs in the State of Michigan*. Unpublished master's thesis. Grand Valley State University.
- Murray, C. (1984). *Losing ground: American social policy 1950-1980*. New York: Basic Books.
- Nickel, P. M., & Eikenberry, A. M. (2007). Responding to "natural" disasters: The ethical implications of the voluntary state. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 29, 534-545.
- Olasky, M. (1992). *The tragedy of American compassion*. Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway.
- Orloff, A. (2002, March). *Social Venture Partners Calgary: Emergence and early stages*. Canadian Centre for Social Entrepreneurship. Retrieved April 18, 2004 from: <http://www.bus.ualberta.ca/ccse/Publications/>
- Özerdem, A., & Jacoby, T. (2006). *Disaster management and civil society: Earthquake relief in Japan, Turkey and India*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Peters, B. G. (1996). *The future of governing: Four emerging models*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Pierre, J. (Ed.). (2000). *Debating governance: Authority, steering and governance*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Powell, T. J. (1994). Introduction. In T. J. Powell (Ed.), *Understanding self-help organizations* (pp. 1-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Reinarman, C. (1995). The twelve-step movement and advanced capitalist culture: The politics of self-control in postmodernity. In M. Darnovsky, B. Epstein, & R. Flacks (Eds.), *Cultural politics and social movements* (pp. 90-109). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Rhodes, R. A. W. (1994). The hollowing out of the state: The changing nature of the public service in Britain. *Political Quarterly*, 65, 138-151.
- Riessman, F., & Carroll, D. (1995). *Redefining self-help: Policy and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Rivlin, G. (2007, October 14). Where everyone knows your portfolio. *The New York Times Magazine*.
- Rosenblum, N. (1998). *Membership and morals: The personal uses of pluralism in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rutnik, T. A., & Bearman, J. (2005). *Giving together: A national scan of giving circles and shared giving*. Baltimore, MD: Forum for Regional Association of Grantmakers. Retrieved February 18, 2005 from <http://www.givingforum.org/givingcircles/research.html>
- Rutnik, T. A., & Beaudoin-Schwartz, B. (2003, October). Growing philanthropy through giving circles: Lessons learned from start-up to grantmaking. Retrieved April 17, 2004 from http://www.abagmd.org/info-url2446/info-url_show.htm?doc_id=199229
- Sbarbaro, C. (2002). *Social Venture Partners replication*. In The Electronic Hallway (No. F96). Retrieved April 18, 2004 from <http://www.hallway.org>
- Schervish, P. G., & Havens, J. J. (2001). The new physics of philanthropy: The supply-side vectors of charitable giving. Part 1: The material side of the supply side. *The CASE International Journal of Educational Advancement*, 2, 95-113.
- Skocpol, T. (2002). The United States: From membership to advocacy. In R. D. Putnam (Ed.), *Democracies in flux: The evolution of social capital in contemporary society* (pp. 103-136). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, D. H., & Pillemer, K. (1983). Self-help groups as social movement organizations: Social structure and social change. In L. Kriesbert (Ed.), *Research in social movements, conflicts, and change* (pp. 203-233). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Social Venture Partners Seattle. (2006, March). *Realizing civic and philanthropic potential through social venture partners Seattle: Lessons learned and future direction*. Seattle, WA: Author.
- Sørensen, E. (2000). Democratic governance and the changing role of users of public services. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 22, 24-44.
- Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. (2005). Network governance and post-liberal democracy. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 27, 197-237.
- Stivers, C. (2000). *Bureau men, settlement women: Constructing public administration in the Progressive Era*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- Tamir, Y. (1998). Revisiting the civic sphere. In A. Gutman (Ed.), *Freedom of association* (pp. 214-238). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- The Funding Network. (n.d.). *Homepage*. Retrieved June 23, 2008 from: <http://www.thefundingnetwork.org.uk/index.php>
- Unwin, S. (2003, April 23). Giving it away. *The Guardian*. Retrieved June 23, 2008 from: <http://www.thefundingnetwork.org.uk/guardian.php>
- Urschel, J. C. (2005). Coming out of the green closet: Wealth discourse and the construction of social change philanthropists. In D. R. Faber & D. McCarthy (Eds.), *Foundations for social change: Critical perspectives on philanthropy and popular movements* (pp. 245-270). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- U. S. White House. (2005, September 2). *Hurricane Katrina leaves Gulf Coast devastated, Bush says*. Press Release. Retrieved November 29, 2008 from: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/news/2005/09/sec-050902-usia06.htm>
- Warren, M. E. (2001). *Democracy and association*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Wuthnow, R. (1994). *Sharing the journey: Support groups and America's new quest for community*. New York: Free Press.
- Wuthnow, R. (1998). *Loose connections: Joining together in America's fragmented communities*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Direct reprint requests to:

Angela M. Eikenberry
Assistant Professor
School of Public Administration
University of Nebraska at Omaha
6001 Dodge Street, CB 115a
Omaha, NE 68182
e-mail: aeikenberry@unomaha.edu